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TITLE: After School Activities and the Risk of STDs

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OBJECTIVES: To determine if high-risk sexual behavior is reduced among inner city youth who are supervised after school.

METHODS: During the 1998-99 school year more than 3,400 students participating in a school based STD screening program provided information regarding their after school activities. Participation in these activities was examined in relation to infection with chlamydia or gonorrhea, as detected with urine LCR.

RESULTS: Students who participate in school sponsored after school activities had lower rates of chlamydia or gonorrhea compared to students who do not participate (87/1,692 (5.1%) vs. 144/1,721 (8.4%); RR 0.61 [95% CI 0.47, 0.80]). The effect was greatest among females (6.7% participants infected vs. 11.3% non-participants infected; RR 0.60 [95% CI 0.44, 0.83]). Similarly, participation in other after school activities not sponsored by the school was protective for STDs [77/1,541 (5.0%) among participants vs. 157/1,909 (8.2%) among non-participants; (RR 0.64 [95% CI 0.49, 0.83]). However, working to earn money after school was associated with an increased risk of STDs: 65/723 (9%) vs. 147/2,285 (6.4%) (RR 1.4 [95% CI 1.06-1.85]). The effects remained after controlling for grade, gender, and socioeconomic status.

CONCLUSION: Adolescents students who work to earn money after school may be at higher risk for STDs because the situation gives them greater exposure to older persons at high risk. Supervision may reduce the opportunities for high-risk sexual behavior while at the same time may increase youth's interest in other social, physical, or academic pursuits. Because the current data are cross-sectional, an intervention trial to determine the direction of the association is warranted.

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